

address information associated therewith, to associate said message with at least one user;

wherein said message control interface is constructed to select said message responsive to user input signals entered via a telephone, and said system adapted to feed a signal corresponding to said message into said downstream network;

wherein said signal is directed to at least one of said terminals, for display on a television set coupled thereto.

Remarks

- 10 1) Applicant thanks the Examiner for his well considered office action and hopes that this response will further the understanding of applicant's invention.
- 2) Applicant hereby submits a marked-up copy of the changes affected by this amendment.
- 15 3) In an interview conducted September 4, 2002, an understanding was reached with the Examiner regarding the claims as amended. Examiner supplied an interview summary.
- 4) Claims 62 and 73-133 are pending in the application and have been rejected by the Examiner.
- 20 5) Regarding claim 129, applicant thanks the Examiner for his observation of the inadvertent spelling mistake. Applicant amended the claim to correct the mistake.
- 6) The examiner rejected claims 107, 110, 112-113, 116-117, 123-124, & 133 as being anticipated by Cowe (US Pat # 5,825,407).
- 25 7) While the Cowe reference relates to a messaging system, a close examination of the reference shows clearly that the broad term 'message' as used by Cowe, is very different than how this term is used in the present invention, as read in light of the specifications. The message in Cowe's invention is not a message addressed to a specific user on an individual basis as in the present invention. Rather, the Cowe

several types of messages and make them appear as "unified" from the standpoint of the user. As commonly understood by those skilled in the art, as well as the nature of message types and the example provided in the specifications (e.g. US 5,568,540) clearly show that a unified messaging system relates to various combinations of messages such as e-mail, video mail, voice mail, and the like. All those messages are characterized by being addressed to individual users. Applicant submits that the term unified messaging should be given its common meaning. Applicant failed to find any mention of unified messaging in the Cowe reference, and thus submits that Cowe fails to teach applicability of the unified messaging environment taught by the present invention.

10) As for the features of recording and digitizing an outgoing message in claim 123 and others, applicant failed to find any reference in Cowe that relate to e-mail messages, much less to the significant advancement of automatically packaging a voice message in an outgoing message. An e-mail message is characterized by addressing information directed at individual users or groups of individual users. Additionally applicant submits that automatic packing of a voice message into an e-mail message is both novel and non-obvious in light of all the references cited by the Examiner. This feature includes both identifying a need, and providing an innovative solution for delivering a response to a message via e-mail without requiring sender knowledge of typing, e-mail systems workings, and the like. It offers other benefits such as overcoming language issues with computers not adapted to the message language, offer capacity for minimal equipment, and the like. Automatic packing of voice messages into an e-mail message that have an intended recipient identified by an address as required by e-mail is very different than the recording and transmittal of messages for broadcast to a television channel to all viewers of that channel as done by Cowe. Neither do other references such as Hashimoto or Gaffney disclose this feature. Furthermore, by their nature, e-mail messages are store and forward type messages, and need to be actively retrieved by the recipient. Cowe does not provide for recipient selected retrieval, but the Cowe message is viewed only as long as the

message is directed to all viewers tuned to a specific television broadcast channel, as the cowe addressing atom is a full channel, addressed via a channel messaging unit 45. This will be clear from col. 5, ll. 61-col. 5, ll. 13, and col. 7, ll. 38-40 as well as Fig. 5. The addressing of the full channel viewing public is also required to achieve the primary purpose expressed in the Cowe specifications to deliver emergency messages to all viewers of an addressed channel. The present invention on the other hand, relates to individually addressed messages, addressed to one or more users on an individual basis, as is made clear in page 4, ll. 8-10, page 4, ll. 30 to page 5 ll. 1, and by the general nature of e-mail and voicemail messages. Thus applicant respectfully submits that the Cowe reference share little if any with the present invention and should be considered irrelevant inasmuch that while the Cowe system may cooperate with the present invention it relates to a different area and type of messaging.

8) The Examiner rejected claim 107 under 35 USC §102(b) as lacking novelty in light of Cowe. Applicant submits that as the claims should be read in light of the specifications, the term message as used in the present invention is clearly directed to a different type of message than the Cowe message. However applicant recognizes that the term 'message' has several broad meanings. Therefore, to better reflect the specifications, and better serve the public notice function of the claims, the claim was amended to better define in the claim body, the term 'message' as referring to a message directed to at least one individual user, or a group of individual users, and that the message is delivered to a television set associated with such user. Applicant believes that the amendment clearly differentiate the claim from the Cowe reference which is directed to messages selected by other than the message recipient and that is transmitted to the broad group of channel viewers.

9) The Examiner rejected claims 113 and 123, as lacking novelty in light of Cowe. Both claims relate to methods of handling messages in unified messaging systems, and both contain the limitation of selecting a message in such a unified messaging system. In page 2, lines 4-15 applicant expanded on the commonly known meaning of the term unified messaging. Unified messaging relates to systems that combine

operator (emergency coordinator, not the viewer) elects to transmit the message to all channel viewers. Thus Cowe's messages are to be transmitted to every viewer of an addressed channel, and represent a different set of requirements than e-mail messages. As none of the references provides for the automatic recording and packing of a voice message within an email, the applicant therefore submits that the claims are allowable.

5 11) Examiner rejected claims 62, 108, 114-115 & 120-122, 125-128 & 132 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Cowe in view of Gaffney (US Patent # 6,333,919).

10 12) Applicant's understanding is that the Gaffney invention relates generally to a method of translating messages from one format to another, according to characteristics of originating and receiving terminals. Thus applicant submits that while the present invention may be beneficially used with the systems proposed in the Gaffney reference, the material taught by Gaffney have little if any bearing on the present invention, which teaches a television messaging gateway and methods for use.

15 13) As explained above, applicant submits that Cowe's invention relates to a different problem, solves a different function, in a different way for a different result, and thus have little if any bearing on the present invention. Thus applicant submits that Cowe should be removed from consideration. Furthermore, applicant submits that no motivation is shown to combine Cowe with Gaffney.

20 14) Considering Examiner's rejection of claims 108-109, 114-115, & 120, contrary to Examiner's apparent understanding, the messages in Cowe are not for the user to choose. The user in Cowe is a user that selects messages for general viewing by the population of viewers in a television channel. The Cowe user selects the channel and the message viewed by the channel viewers, and the time to display the messages.

25 The user of the present invention is the message recipient, and the message is individually addressed to a recipient (see page 8, ll. 14-16, page 2, ll. 29). While a message may be directed to a plurality of recipients, it is the recipient who selects the message to view, the time to display the message, and the like. Thus, Cowe provides little bearings on this aspect of the invention as well.

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- 15) As the Cowe and Gaffney references are not properly combinable, and that neither Gaffney nor Cowe teach separately or in combination the selection of messages by the message recipient in a television based messaging system, or the automatic packing of a recorded message in an outgoing e-mail, applicant respectfully submits that the claims are allowable.
- 16) Considering claim 125, in addition to all the inadequacies of the Cowe and Gaffney references discussed above, applicant respectfully point out that the as originally presented clearly required transmitting the message to a terminal (set-top box, see page 8 ll. 34-35) associated with the message recipient and displaying the message on a television set coupled to the terminal. Neither Cowe nor Gaffney teach the claimed combination of displaying a message directed to a particular user on a television coupled to a terminal associated with the user. Thus applicant submits that the claim is allowable without more.
- 17) The Examiner rejected claims 73-82, 84-90, 92-97, 99, 101-102, 105, 111, &129 as being obvious over Hashimoto (EP 0 793, 387 A2) in light of Cowe.
- 18) EP 0 793,387 does not disclose the television messaging gateway, as it requires specialized televisions having mail receiving and sending elements. (abstract, and the document as a whole). The present TV messaging gateway is constructed to operate as a gateway between mail servers and any kind of television, with the bridging function happening either at a central location (such as the headend), or distributed between the central location and a set-top box in case of a distributed gateway. This reduces the intelligence level demanded from the equipment at the user premises. At the same time, Cowe does not provide any means to direct the message to an individual user, but only to the viewer community of a complete channel, and thus does not have a messaging gateway as well. Claims 73 and 93, and claims dependent therefrom, are directed to a television messaging gateway missing from both Hashimoto and Cowe. Similarly, claims 101 and claim 129, and claims dependent therefrom, explicitly claim the limitation of a television messaging gateway. Applicant therefore submits that as neither Hashimoto nor Cowe teach a television messaging gateway, the claim is allowable.
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19) Additionally, the Examiner rejected claim 93 as similar grounds to those of claim 73 (to which applicant responded), in combination with a message control interface allegedly supplied by Cowe. Applicant submits that cowe does not disclose a message control interface responsive to user voice. Additionally, Cowe does not disclose nor suggests the control of messages having address information associated therewith to associate the message with a user, as Cowe is directed to any viewer of a television channel when the message is displayed. Thus, Cowe is irrelevant to the present the present invention, and applicant believe claim 93 to be allowable.

In light of the showing and all other reasons stated above, applicant submits that rejections presented by the Examiner in the office action mailed July 5, 2002, were improper. Applicant believes that he specifically addressed each and every concern the Examiner raised with regards to the independent claims, and many of the dependent claims. Those dependent claims, if any, that have not specifically mentioned are allowable in view of their respective independent claims. Applicant submits that the original claims, as well as the claims as amended, are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection and advancement to allowance of all pending claims is therefore solicited.

Respectfully submitted



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receiving a plurality of messages directed to a user, in a television messaging gateway;
converting said messages to corresponding video signals; and,
transmitting said signals to a particular terminal associated with said user for outputting
said message on a television set coupled thereto.

5 102. The method of claim 101, further comprising the step of entering user outgoing messages via
said upstream network.

103. The method according to claims 101, further comprising the steps of recording a user's voice
and embedding said recording within an outgoing message.

104. The method of claim 103, wherein said step of embedding is carried out automatically.

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105. The method of claim 101, wherein said television messaging gateway is responsive to user
input entered via telephone.

106. The method of claim 101, wherein said television messaging gateway is implemented in part at
15 a central location and in part in the user premises.

107. A method for handling messages comprising the steps of:

using a telephone, inputting commands to a television messaging gateway, to select at
least one message directed to a user;

causing said television messaging gateway to output messages in response to said

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commands, ~~said messages are outputted on a television set for outputting said message~~
on a television set associated with said user, wherein said television being coupled directly
or indirectly to said messaging gateway.

108. The method of claim 107 further comprising the steps of:

- 5 Recording a voice message;
- Automatically packing said voice message into an e-mail message; and,
- Sending said e-mail message.

109 The method of claim 108 further comprising the step of inputting said voice message via said
telephone.

10 110. The method according to claim 107, wherein said messaging server is a unified messaging
server.

111. A computer readable media containing software that when executed by a computer will cause
said computer to substantially perform as the television messaging gateway of claim 73.

112. A computer readable media containing software that when executed by a computer will cause
15 said computer to substantially perform the method steps performed by the television messaging
gateway of claim 107.

113. A method for handling messages in a unified messaging system where messages are delivered
via a digital television network, the method comprising:

selecting messages in said unified messaging system, said message having address
20 information associated therewith to associate the message with at least one user;

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receiving signals corresponding to said messages via said television network; and,

outputting said messages on a television coupled to said television distribution network.

114. The method of claim 113 further comprising the steps of:

recording a voice message;

5 Automatically packing said voice message into an e-mail message; and,

sending said e-mail message.

115. The method of claim 114 further comprising the step of inputting said voice message via said telephone.

116. The method of claim 113 wherein said messages are of a type selected from at least two of
10 members of the group consisting of e-mail messages, voice messages, audio messages, video messages, fax messages, text messages, and multi-media messages.

117. The method of claim 113 wherein said step of selecting is performed by entering commands to select said messages, and wherein said commands are entered utilizing a telephone keypad, a user voice, or a combination thereof.

15 118. The method of claim 114 wherein said step of recording is performed by a terminal coupled to said television network, and wherein said voice message is entered using a microphone coupled to said terminal.

119. The method of claim 113, further comprising the step of outputting a progress bar to indicate relative position within a message, when the message is selected from a group consisting of a
20 video message, an audio message or an audio visual message.

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120. A method for handling messages, adapted to operate in a television messaging environment,

the method comprising the steps of:

Recording a voice message;

Automatically packing said voice message into an e-mail message; and,

5 Sending said e-mail message.

121. The method of claim 120 further comprising the step of first receiving an incoming message,

and wherein said voice message and e-mail message comprise an outgoing message in
response to said incoming message.

122. The method of claim 120 wherein said step of recording or a portion thereof is performed using

10 a telephone.

123. A method for handling messages in a unified messaging system where messages are delivered

via a television network, the method comprising:

selecting messages addressed to a user in said unified messaging system;

receiving signals corresponding to said messages via said television network; and,

15 outputting said messages on a television set coupled to said television distribution

network;

recording an outgoing message;

digitizing said outgoing message; and,

automatically packaging said message in an outgoing e-mail message and sending said

20 outgoing message.

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124. The method of claim 123 wherein said steps of recording, digitizing and packaging are performed by a server remote to the television set.

125. A method for handling messages, adapted to operate in conjunction with a messaging server constructed to forward messages, and with a television distribution system having a downstream network constructed to carry signals and selectively distribute said signals to a plurality of terminals connected thereto, wherein said terminal is constructed to selectively display an image corresponding to said signal on a television screen, and an upstream network capable of delivering user input signals, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a plurality of messages directed to a particular user in a messaging server;

from a television messaging gateway, transmitting a signal corresponding to at least one

of said messages to a terminal associated with a user via said downstream network;

displaying said message on a television set coupled to said addressable terminal; and,

recording a user voice, and embedding said voice within an outgoing message.

126. The method of claim 125, further comprising the step of entering user outgoing messages via said upstream network.

127. The method of claim 125, wherein said step of recording is carried out using a telephone.

128. The method of claim 125 further comprising the step of notifying the user upon receipt of a message.

129. A system for handling messages adapted to operate in conjunction with a television distribution system having a downstream network constructed to carry signals and selectively distribute said

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signals to a plurality of terminals connected thereto, wherein at least one of said terminals is constructed to selectively display an image corresponding to said signal on a television screen, operating in conjunction with an upstream network constructed to deliver user input signals to a central location, the system comprising:

- 5 a distributed television messaging gateway, having a message control interface for selecting at least one message from a unified messaging server, said message having address information associated therewith, to associate said message with at least one user;
- 10 wherein said message control interface is constructed to select said message-message responsive to user input signals entered via a telephone, and said system adapted to feed a signal corresponding to said message into said downstream network;
- wherein said signal is directed to at least one of said terminals, for display on a television set coupled thereto.

130. The system of claim 129 wherein said television messaging gateway is implemented in part at a central location and in part in the user premises.

131. The system of claim 129 further comprising a voice recorder to record user voice, and wherein said system is further constructed to embed at least a portion of said recorded voice within an outgoing message.

132. A computer readable media containing software that when executed by a computer will cause said computer to substantially perform the method steps performed by the television

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